



Town of Natick

Spring 2016 Newsletter

*Issued by Martha L. White,
Town Administrator*

Natick Board of Selectmen

Charles Hughes, Chair
Richard Jennett, Vice Chair
Nicholas Mabardy, Clerk
Joshua Ostroff
John Connolly

Town of Natick, Massachusetts

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2016 Annual Town Election

The 2016 Annual Town Election will have taken place by the time this Newsletter is distributed. This election will bring about significant changes to the membership of the Board of Selectmen, given Mr. Charles Hughes decision to not run for re-election and Mr. Joshua Ostroff's decision to resign from the Board. As we approach the election, three candidates, including incumbent Rick Jennett, are vying for two 3-year seats, and two candidates are vying for the remaining 2 years of Mr. Ostroff's term. This election will bring at least two new members to the Board of Selectmen, and the longest-serving current members will have departed.

Members of the Board of Selectmen bear substantial responsibility, given the terms of the Town Charter, which stipulates that the Board serves as the chief policy making agency of the town and, accordingly, is responsible for the issuance of policy directives and guidelines to be followed by all town agencies.

Two New Waste Reduction Programs

This spring, the Town is introducing two new waste reduction programs. In April, the DPW will begin recycling mattresses and box springs, with financial assistance through a grant from MassDEP. This will be administered through the bulk pickup program for a fee of \$5 per item; residents should contact the DPW for instructions on how to participate.

The Town is also launching a two-year curbside composting pilot program and is looking for volunteers to participate; this pilot program will allow us to evaluate the level of interest and cost-effectiveness of a Town-wide compost collection program. Volunteers in the pilot program will have the opportunity to dispose of food waste (including meat, dairy, bread, fruit, vegetables and other materials) for weekly curbside collection on the resident's regular trash day. The

Town provides the curbside container, as well as the countertop collection bin; participants will pay \$25 for a one-year supply of approved compostable bags. The pilot program is open to single-family households that currently receive trash collection from the Town; 500 spots are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/natickcompostpilot>.

Lower Solar Installation Costs

Natick was recently selected to participate in Solarize Mass Natick, a state program designed to lower solar installation costs for residents and small businesses. This program, which is led by local volunteers, helps interested property owners navigate the complexities associated with solar programs, and connects them with a preferred installer. Visit solarizemassnatick.com to learn more.

2016 Spring Annual Town Meeting

Natick's Representative Town Meeting serves as the Town's legislative branch. Pursuant to state and local law, certain powers are vested in Town Meeting, such as the authority to appropriate operating and capital funds, approve changes to the Town's General and Zoning By-Laws, authority to borrow funds, appropriate funds to and from Stabilization Funds, acquire interest in property and much more.

At the upcoming Spring Annual Town Meeting, which commences on April 12 at 7:30 at the Natick High School, Town Meeting will discuss and vote on several Articles that support and advance our sound financial management practices. Such proposals include rescission of borrowing authorizations not needed for project completion, appropriation of funds to our Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Fund, approval of a balanced Town operating budget that funds valued and cost-effective Town services, enhancement of personal property exemptions to assist qualified

property owners, and more. In addition, Town Meeting will consider capital improvements and equipment totaling over \$8 million; this annual capital budget was developed pursuant to the Town's 5-year Capital Plan and the prioritization of projects therein.

Several important initiatives will be debated and voted by Town Meeting, including appropriation of funds (in addition to funds appropriated by the 2015 Fall Annual Town Meeting) for a Town-wide master plan, acquisition of a parcel of land for the protection of the Town's water supply, consideration of a simplified street acceptance process, reorganization of the Zoning By-Laws, acquisition of parcels that comprise the Cochituate Rail Trail, and much more. As always, these and other proposals are sure to generate interest and lively debate among Town Meeting members and their constituents.

Cochituate Rail Trail

The Cochituate Rail Trail project continues to make progress. The design is being revised to have an interim terminus at Willow Street, about 1000 feet north of the Natick Center MBTA station. A future direct connection to Natick Center will be designed when the commuter station itself is redesigned in the coming years.

The Selectmen recently agreed to purchase the CSX right-of-way (the former Saxonville Branch), with closing scheduled for Fall 2016, subject to the Town assembling funding for the purchase price of about \$6.3 million. Unfortunately, this price was not subject to significant negotiation. Town Meeting will soon consider the appropriation of funds towards this purchase price; the source of funds would be from what is known as the FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund, comprised of mitigation funds from various development projects. If approved, these funds may be supplemented by a state grant, and by private fundraising by a new non-profit, the Friends of Natick Trails, with the goal of raising the full amount needed for the property acquisition.

Construction of the Rail Trail is scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2018, with funding by the federal and state governments, and is expected to take about two construction seasons. More information is available at www.NatickMA.gov/crt.

Marion Street Bridge

Residents will be pleased to finally see progress on the Marion Street - "Tilly" Ciccarielli - bridge. This is a state-funded and state-controlled project. Similar to our experience with the Route 9/Oak St. intersection, utility relocations delayed the start of the project. As readers doubtlessly know, this bridge closure has been a serious inconvenience, causing detours and delays since August 2012. A complete replacement of the 1896 structure is expected to take about a year. Further updates will be provided as the work progresses.

In addition, the Town is exploring a redesign of the nearby intersection of North Avenue and Marion Street, a project that is intended to calm traffic to the benefit of residents and pedestrians. This work is subject to approval of funds for drainage improvements by the Spring Annual Town Meeting under the capital improvement warrant article. Of note to area residents, although the new bridge will be suitable for all vehicles, Marion Street's heavy commercial truck exclusion is not expected to change.

Pegan Lane

The December 1, 2015 Special Town Meeting authorized the acquisition of a Conservation Restriction on this 16.3 acre parcel, and appropriated \$1 million for this purpose. With these favorable votes, Town Meeting imposed conditions on this acquisition, including the requirement that adequate public parking be provided, that the property remain a passive recreational area in perpetuity, and more.

After lengthy negotiations to ensure compliance with the Town Meeting vote, the Town recently finalized its acquisition of the Conservation Restriction.

This acquisition is part of a long-range effort to acquire and protect substantial acreage in this unique area. To date, and including adjoining land of the New England Forestry Foundation, over 100 contiguous acres has been acquired, protected, and made available for the public's use and enjoyment. These properties contain Natick's highest elevation, with unmatched scenic views of Mount Monadnock to the northeast and the Blue Hills to the east.

The Town's acquisition of this Conservation Restriction is the result of months of impassioned and determined work by many people. Their efforts will benefit generations to come.